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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN AND INL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2017

TAGS: SNAR PREL ZK

SUBJECT: UZBEKS AND AFGHANS SPAR OVER COUNTERNARCOTICS

Classified By: CDA Brad Hanson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The Italian Ambassador convened the semi-annual meeting of the Mini-Dublin Group for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan May 10 by providing an overview of the narcotics situation in Central Asia and Afghanistan, which he called "a disaster." Talk is nice, he said, but more action is needed.

Addressing United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Representative James Callahan, the Ambassador said that Italy is, in particular, "fed up" with excuses for why the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC) is not yet operational. Continuing delays are unacceptable, he said, and urged that UNODC approach donors for help if it is unable to resolve problems caused by CARICC-member states lack of political will. (Comment: Then DCM made the same point to Callahan on December 28. End comment.)

¶2. (C) Kamol Dusmetov, Chief of Uzbekistan's National Center for Drug Control, attributed the region's narcotics problems to the situation in Afghanistan. The problem, he said, is that the Afghan government and international community is not doing enough to establish alternative livelihood programs. This statement engendered a strong response from the Afghan Ambassador, who said that the real problem is with terrorist and criminal groups which benefit from continued drug production and that these groups must be dealt with before alternative livelihood programs will succeed. It would be useful, the Ambassador said, if Afghanistan's neighbors would do more than just criticize the country's counternarcotics efforts, perhaps by increasing their efforts to control the flow of precursor chemicals into Afghanistan. Dusmetov responded that Uzbekistan cannot be expected to control the flow of drugs from, and precursors to, Afghanistan without much more assistance from donors. Dusmetov had no response to the Italian Ambassador's suggestion that perhaps this would not be such a problem if Uzbekistan would devote some of the resources to narcotics and precursor control that it now uses to prevent foreign vehicles and wine from entering the country.

¶3. (C) Comment: The Italian Ambassador's suggestion aside, participants were noticeably less critical of the Uzbeks than in previous meetings. Post attributes this more to Dusmetov's attendance than to any major improvement in Uzbekistan's cooperation with the international community on narcotics issues. Dusmetov's attendance at the meeting marks the first time that the Government of Uzbekistan has

participated in the Mini-Dublin Group in at least the past two years. Unfortunately, he brought little to the meeting beyond the usual complaints that the international community is not doing enough to fight drugs in Afghanistan or providing enough assistance to Uzbekistan.

¶4. (C) Comment, continued: Post agrees with the Italian Ambassador that it is past time for CARICC to become operational. According to UNODC, the delays have been caused mostly by Kazakhstan not having turned the building where CARICC is to be housed over to the UN. Additionally, some member countries, including Russia, have not yet signed the documents establishing CARICC, although the Russian representative said this would happen "soon." In Post's view, the time is approaching when Washington and other donors may want to consider engaging directly with the governments in question in an attempt to stiffen what appears to be flagging political will to see CARICC in operation.

HANSON